

श्रीमती वसुन्धरा राजे: सर, फरिस्ट एक्ट के बारे में प्लानिंग कमिशन की ओर से मैं तो कह नहीं सकती। मैं ने कहा कि these are implementation issues which will be taken up by the Ministry and the State. जहां तक सांसद के भाग का सवाल है, I would like to state over here that the money is sent by the Ministry of Rural Development to the DRDAs. The idea of doing this was, basically, to decentralise the allocation of funds, to basically try and cut down on the delays that normally take place because of lean agricultural season and, maybe, money going down to the districts. Sometimes, as we know, the money is not used for the particular purpose that we send it for, but gets used for paying salaries. The DRDA has M.Ps and M.L.As. as its members; so there is a certain element of public accountability in it. The allocations need to be need-based. This can only be appreciated really at the ground level. As far as the general policy of the Ministry of Rural Development's anti-poverty scheme is concerned, money, normally, goes down from the Ministry of Rural Development to the DRDAs. Again, as I said, this is something that would be between the Ministry and the States. The Planning Commission makes the allocation to the States on the basis of the project that is put up by them.

DR. KARAN SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, this question has two parts; one is relating to the Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana; the other is relating to the Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Yojana. I find, under the Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Yojana, only Rs. 2.68 lakhs have been given for that year; and they were only for contingent component. Now, unemployment is one of the most serious problems we face in this country, particularly, in the *Pahari* areas. I am not able to understand this. Would the Minister please explain why the provision for the Rozgar Yojana is so low? Does that mean that there are no unemployed people in Himachal Pradesh?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Setting up of postal tariff panel

*161. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to set up a separate postal tariff panel in order to phase out subsidies on postal items;

(b) whether it is a fact that during the last fiscal year the cost of providing postal articles and services continued to rise but even then, Government incurred a deficit of about Rs.1652 crores;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) what steps Government are taking to stimulate cost effective viable operations in the postal sector; and

(e) by when such a postal tariff panel is likely to come in existence?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) to (e) There is no proposal to set up a separate Postal Tariff Panel in order to phase out subsidies on postal items. The cost of providing postal articles and services continues to rise during the last fiscal year. The deficit for the year 2000-2001 has been to the tune of Rs.1,550 crores. The high deficit of the Department of Posts is due to continuous increase in the cost of operations and for maintaining a large rural postal network having 1,38,443 post offices. Further, the cost of operations has been increasing due to revision of salaries, wages, dearness allowances and rise in cost of various inputs in operations of the service including cost of transportation etc. The increase in postal tariff has also taken place at small doses and that also not every year. The percentage increase in revenue has always been less than the expenditure in providing postal services.

The Government has taken number of steps for generation of additional income through introduction of premium products services like Speed Post, Business Post, Greeting Post, Media Post etc. to cater the needs of business and corporate clients. The Government is also exploring new prospects of business in partnership with other organizations, for example, 'Money Transfer Service' in collaboration with Western Union, 'Electronic Fund Transfer' in partnership with UTI Bank, E-Post Project with Nettilinx, distribution of Mutual Fund Bonds, etc. Besides, several cost cutting measures have also been taken with the help of technology to keep down the cost of operation at the barest minimum level.

Issue of Pakistani Visa to Indian Journalists

*162. SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have approached the Government of Pakistan on the issue of granting visa to the Indian journalists to cover Afghanistan developments;